

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, May 6. 1693.



Quest. 1. **Y**ou are desired in as serious a manner as possible, before the next Fast-day to resolve this Question: Whether such Thoughts, Words, Actions, or Recreations as are sinful on a Sabbath-day, because 'tis a Sabbath, be not also sinful on a Fast-day because 'tis a Fast, that is, on such a Fast as Lawful Authority has now called us to? --Or thus: Whether we may use any Trade or Recreation on any part of these Fast-days, any more than if it were a Lords-day, or Christian Sabbath? In your Answer you are desired to explain these Scriptures, Levit. 23. from 26. to 35. Isaiah 58. 13, 14. and on comparing 'em to give your Judgment whether the chief Drift of this in Isaiah be a weekly Sabbath or a fasting Sabbath, because that Fast in Leviticus is also call'd a Sabbath?

Ans. That this approaching Fast is indicted by Lawful Authority, none can deny but those who don't deserve its protection, nay, such as are for the most part equally Traytors to the Kings of Earth and Heaven. That these monthly Fasts are not Fanatical, or owing their rise to the late times, as some of the same wise men would persuade us, who would follow the Example of those they hate, and reject a good thing merely because it has been made use of by those who don't please 'em, as is plain to any who can but think as far back as K. Charles I. who first commanded these stated Fasts, and that for the very same Cause they were renewed by the present Government, the Reduction of Ireland, as may be seen in Cox's Excellent History.

To the Pinch of the present Question, Whether such Thoughts, Words or Recreations as are sinful on a Sabbath because 'tis a Sabbath, be not also sinful on a Fast-day because 'tis a Fast, &c? We think in some sense it not only holds, but even yet more, we mean that some Thoughts, Words and Actions may be lawful on an ordinary Sabbath-day which are not so on a Fast: For Example, moderate feasting, and such a sober cheerfulness as is not inconsistent with the Holiness of the Day: (for Holy we must believe it, and think those at least as Criminal who would unhallow Time, as those who do the like with Place,) But in a Fast-day we are to afflict both our Souls and our Bodies, by such a degree of Abstinence as will best fit us for the highest Acts of Devotion. And the Consequence is yet stronger, that still much less ought we to use any Trade, &c. because the whole Day is by that Authority, which has at least Place and even all Time too except a seventh part, at its disposal in Religious Matters, strictly and solemnly set apart, consecrated and devoted to Gods Service, to invoke his Pity and Pardon, of which he knows we have but too much need, it being perfect Sacrilege, and a robbing of God to dispose of this Sacred Time to any other use. Not that we here would affirm, that any Time of mans Designation and appropriation to Divine Worship is equally Sacred with that of Gods own immediate Appointment: However the Obligation is even here so strong, as none but a desperate Man will attempt to break thro' it, since Fasting being in it self a Duty, where Circumstances require it, 'twould be very hard if it shou'd be thought less a Duty, where Authority has enjoyn'd it. Some dispute its true there may be about the Time, Extent or Duration of this Fast, when it ought to end, whether with the Day, at Sunset, or immediately after Evening Service. It seems to us, by the general practice of Good men, both of our own Communion, and others, that 'tis clos'd at Evening Service, after which most Persons are us'd to take some sort of light Refection: But for the way of Fasting observ'd by many Families, only to go to Church in the Morning, come home again to Dinner, and to play in the Afternoon, 'tis such a pleasant sort of an Abstinence, that verily if 'twere not for the Name

on't, People might as well not Fast at all, it being such an Expedient as we dare say never enter'd into the Head of the Primitive Christians; and we'd fain know what they cou'd do more on other Holidays, unless they carried their meat to Church, and feasted even while there, like some of the Ancients. A true Religious Fast, is in Our Opinion, a total abstinence from meat and drink as far as consists with the present state of our Bodies, in order to humble our Souls before God with the utmost intention of Mind, and fervour of Devotion, thereby to avert his fear'd or threaten'd Anger. But We wish the true Reason why we have so little true Fasting, and People are so little in earnest therein, be not because they think Almighty God is not in earnest in his Judgments, but that he'll forgive and save without Repentance, and do all, tho we do nothing, wherein We heartily Wish we mayn't soon find our selves fatally mistaken; whereas on the contrary, We believe there hardly ever was any Nation, Turk, Jew, Christian or Heathen, that by solemn fasting attempted to Atone Heaven, and divert a Temporal or National Calamity, but they obtain'd what they desir'd -- Nineveh is famous, We might give others nearer home, (but don't design to forestall Peoples going to Church by our Penny Sermon) one we can't omit, which seems to us very remarkable, and 'twas what happen'd in our own Age, but a few Years since: When the Turks were in the lowest Condition, after their Loss at Vienna, and as we remember, the long Run Prince Lewis had amongst 'em as far as Nissa, when their Affairs seem'd at the lowest Ebb that perhaps they've e're bin at since the Ottoman Family ascended the Throne, they indicted one of the most solemn Fasts we've read of, throwing themselves on the ground in vast numbers, and invoking the mercy of Heaven on themselves and their Empire, the Grand Signior himself in Person assisting in it; and whether this was in vain, all Christendom may since witness, that Empire making an unexpected stand, and clearing it self again when it seem'd at the very brink of Ruine.

For the Texts in the Question, 'tis plain the former, Levit. 23. from 26. to 32. relate to a Religious Fast, the Rules of which are v. 28, 29, 30. *Ye shall do no Work in that same day, for 'tis a day of Attonement: Whatsoever Soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that day, whatsoever Soul it be that doth any Work in that day, will I destroy from among his People:* (What then do those Wretches deserve, who impudently and presumptuously spend this Day, like the Lord's Day it self, in feasting and carousing, in a publick and avow'd opposition to the Laws of God and Man; but the former will find 'em out, if the latter either can't, or the baseness of Officers let's 'em escape unpunished, for that such Monsters there have been we are morally certain, and don't much doubt but there will be in the approaching Fast, as well as others: But if they will Damn themselves, let it be by themselves, We have no reason I'm sure to follow their Example, the only accidental Good they do being to provoke Heaven to sink yet lower their abandon'd Cause and them.) We believe all honest Williamites will forgive this long zealous Parenthesis, for which there's so much Reason, We go on and dismiss this in Levit. after we have observ'd with the Querist, that this Fast is call'd a Sabbath, and that twice following in the 32. v. *It shall be to you a Sabbath of rest: And agen, Ye shall celebrate your Sabbath.* And it's as plain, that in the other place, Isa. 58. The Sabbath there, to the observation whereof so many great Blessings are promis'd, is no other but a Fast; and accordingly that Chapter is often appointed by our Church for the first Lesson on days of Fasting and Humiliation, which it does properly, and that



this Sabbath was no other than a Fast, (tho' We confess We learnt that *Notion* first from our *Querist*) We think is very plain, to any Man who reads the whole with Application — to instance in one or two places — that a Fast is spoken of in this Chapter, appears among others from the 3d. V. in the very Terms, *Wherefore have we Fasted, say they?* That this Fast was the same with the Sabbath mention'd in the 2 last Verses, appears not only from the drift of the whole, &c. but clearly from an Expression twice repeated in v. 13. which 'tis granted treats of a Sabbath; 'tis that of *doing thy Pleasure*, and *finding thy own Pleasure*; which if they do not on the Sabbath, Blessings are Promis'd 'em — but v. 3. is the self-same Phrase, "In the Day of your Fast you find Pleasure, as well as exact all your Labours — which finding Pleasure is oppos'd to that Affliction both of Soul and Body requir'd on such a Solemnity. And now, if there's any need on't, We beg the Reader's Pardon for having been something long, but We hope not tedious, on so weighty an Occasion.

Quest. 2. from a Lady. ] *There is a Difficulty in St. John 20. which I cannot resolve, nor have all the Commentators I have met with satisfy'd me in it, and that is concerning the Manner of our Saviour's appearing to his Disciples, the Doors being shut. We know he had a real, not a fantastical Body, from St. Luke 24. 39. where he bids his Disciples handle and see him, for a Spirit had not Flesh and Bones as he had. How is it then, that having a real Body he appear'd after the manner of a Spirit; for methinks there is an Emphasis laid on those Words [the Doors being shut.] Do glorified Bodies then obtain the Nature of Spirits, and become penetrable by other Bodies? — Excuse me, I've read no Metaphysics, if I shou'dn't express my self in so proper Terms, I hope you'll make a shift to understand my meaning.*

Ans. Nature and good Genius are better Metaphysicians than Thomas or Suarez, nor have you any need, Madam, of an Excuse for what needs not, nor easily can be mended. To your Question — tho' We have formerly taken some Notice of it from another Hand, you urge it so much closer, that We think it worth the while once more to consider it. 'Tis agreed by all but a few hair-brain'd Hereticks, that our Saviour's Blessed Body was not fantastical but real, both before and after his Resurrection: But the main of the difficulty seems to lye here, Whether it might not have some Properties usually ascrib'd to Spirits, which other Bodies have not, nay, which perhaps that it self had not, usually at least before the Resurrection? Particularly, whether on our Saviour's Appearance to his Disciples, the Doors being shut, it does not necessarily follow that he came through the Doors, and so that his Body was penetrable, that two Bodies may be at the same time in the same place, and that for all this Absurdity we may believe Transubstantiation. First then for the Scripture it self, which if We can't get clear of, 'tis in vain to go any further — We confess there is an Emphasis plainly laid on the *ἡν δὲ θύραι κεκλεισμέναι* — [the Doors being shut] since 'twas that very thing made the Miracle. One way of getting clear is by saying he came in before the Doors were shut, and remain'd there invisible 'till he pleas'd to discover himself; but this We doubt won't reach the full import of the Words, because 'tis said after the shutting of the Doors is mention'd — *ἡλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς* — and in the 26. *ἐρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς* — The Doors being shut Jesus came — the manner of whose coming must be enquir'd into, which must necessarily be one of these two, either by penetrating the Door, and coming thro' it, or opening it invisibly after they had shut it, for thro' the Door or Doorsted he must certainly come: Now that he came not by Penetration We think We can prove, first from the Scripture it self, and then from Reason and the Impossibility of the thing in its own Nature. Our Argument grounded on Scripture is this — Supposing the penetrability of Bodies possible, yet the same Body can't be penetrable and impenetrable at the same time, nor can those two absolute contraries, nay, contradictions, be in the same subject: But at the time of the Appearance of our Saviour to his Disciples, it appears plainly from the Text that his Body was impenetrable, which if he came thro' the Door must be penetrable; this appears from his bidding

Thomas "Thrust his Finger into his Hand, and his Hand into his Side, the Wounds it's probable being large enough, as made by great Nails, and a broad-headed Spear. Now a Wound is a Dissolution of Continuity — there must therefore be something solid about these Wounds, otherwise the Saint cou'd never have felt 'em: Nor can it be said that our Saviour's Body was sometimes penetrable, at others impenetrable, because the Assertors of its penetrability make that the Property of his spiritual Body, and Properties can't like Cloaths be put off and on at Pleasure. Besides, according to their Notion, the Door must be penetrable as well as our Saviour's Body, for penetration implies a mixture, and that must be mutual, at which rate here's a New Miracle found out, a spiritual Door too, by which the Heretick's Instance wou'd be quite spoil'd, and I am a Door as literally true as This is my Body; a yet unheard of sort of Transubstantiation.

Now for Reason — a Body can't obtain the Nature of a Spirit, for then 'twou'd be invisible as well as impalpable, and that properly not accidentally — Nor can a Spirit obtain the Nature of a Body, since in Apparitions 'tis Body that we see, not Spirit, any more than we feel the Soul of a Man when we shake him by the Hand — that Body which the Spirit forms to it self to appear in, unless it has some Corporeal Vehicle, as others affirm: But hence it may be Objected, that one Property of Body, particularly our Saviour's and St. Peter's, has been suspended, namely their Gravity, they not sinking in the Water — why not then another, namely, impenetrability? We Answer — Gravitation is but a Quality, or respect of Body to Body, and the same Body is capable of being render'd lighter or heavier; as for Example, such a Column of Air which sometimes bears a greater proportion to the Mercury than at others; but Impenetrability or actual quantitative Parts is of the very Essence of Matter, and at the same time we conceive of one we include the other: Besides, 'twas no Contradiction in Nature, that the Water shou'd be either render'd a few Degrees more buoyant for our Saviour and St. Peter, or that an Angel shou'd support 'em by his *Mytharchic Power*, or that Command the superior Nature has over the Inferior, Spirit over Matter — But no Angel in Heaven can make a thing be and not be, exist and not exist in the same place at the same time, or two solid Bodies Exist coextended with each other. Much easier was't for our Blessed Lord to open the Door so suddenly and imperfectly as that the Motion shou'd fly both the Sight and Ears of his Disciples, especially if their Eyes were held — *ἐκράδυντο* — much in the same manner with the two Disciples, who even tho' they saw him cou'd not know him; or as the Jews, thro' the midst of whom (the Croud of 'em, by their Sides sure, not thro' their Bodies) he more than once pass'd and vanish'd out of their sight — And thus much of this Curious Question.

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